

Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Subcommittee of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Accomplishment Report for 2016

Planned: *Reduce human caused grizzly bear mortalities, particularly in the front country. Continue implementing food storage orders and sanitation measures on public lands.*

Accomplished: All four National Forests continued efforts to educate both the public and employees regarding the food storage order and proper behavior in bear country. This included the use of Bear Rangers on the Kootenai (KNF) and Lolo (LNF) National Forests. Colville National Forest (CNF) Forest Protection Officers and district biologists conducted 20 patrols to inform and educate forest visitors about camping and hunting safely in grizzly bear habitat while other staff provided training on food storage and large carnivore safety to campground hosts and other groups during the summer. These patrols were funded, in part, by a \$3,200 grant provided by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee. In addition, recreation and biologist staff on the CNF gave two presentations to the public and district employees about proper food storage and large carnivore safety during the summer season.

Most campgrounds, developed recreation sites and many trailheads have “Bear Aware” information posted. Other sanitation related activities included the purchase of 20 food storage boxes on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNFs). The CNF installed 23 food storage boxes at heavily used recreation sites within or adjacent to the Selkirk recovery zone. These food storage boxes were purchased in 2015 with assistance from Conservation Northwest, Defenders of Wildlife, Kalispel Tribe of Indians, Pend Oreille County Public Utility District, Seattle City Light, Selkirk Conservation Alliance, and Scenic Canyons Recreation Services, Inc.

An Idaho Fish and Game Conservation Officer conducted 208 gate checks and 1,644 filed contacts with the public within the recovery zones during the last year. Many of these were during the spring and fall big game/black bear hunting seasons. In addition, he gave 17 public presentations (to over 400 citizens) on bear ecology and proper identification.

The CNF, KNF, IPNF and LNF conducted gate monitoring on the 1,136 closures installed on NFS lands within the recovery zones. Approximately 50 percent of all closures are checked on an annual basis.

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (MT DNRC), through a Habitat Conservation Plan with the USFWS, continued to implement measures to avoid and minimize grizzly bear mortality. MT DNRC trains employees to work in bear country; posts signs at key portals to grizzly bear habitat; and has a food storage order, among other measures.

The Kootenai National Forest continued efforts to educate both the public and employees regarding the food storage order and proper behavior in bear country. The KNF Rexford, Libby and Three Rivers RDs held bear spray training for District and associated personnel. Approximately 51 campsites at 9 campgrounds were monitored for compliance with food storage orders in cooperation with the IGBC, with 47 contacts made through personal communication.

The Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) partnered with CNF staff in carrying out grizzly bear protection patrols within and near the Selkirk Recovery Ecosystem. WDFW Enforcement personnel have also conducted emphasis patrols relative to grizzly bears. One officer has a Karelian Bear Dog, “Jax”, which is trained to help in aversive conditioning to habituated bears.

The city of Troy, Montana worked with MFWP and Vital Ground to secure the 2 public waste transfer stations on City of Troy property. The site inside city limits has been fenced and is awaiting electrification to prevent bears from accessing garbage. They also moved the public use dumpsters at the Troy Landfill to the city site, thereby eliminating household garbage collection at the Troy landfill.

Lincoln County worked with the Hecla Mining Company to open a new waste transfer station at the intersection of the Troy Mine road and Highway 56. The plan is for the county waste transfer sites at the Halfway House and Little Joes to be closed and the dumpsters to be permanently moved to the new location in early 2017. Lincoln County worked with MFWP and MT DNRC to secure the dumpsters on DNRC land at the confluence of the Fisher and Kootenai Rivers. Once the planning process is complete the dumpsters will be permanently secured with electric fencing in early 2017. Lincoln County is working with the USFS to secure the waste transfer stations

on USFS-KNF land in Pinkham Creek and near the community of the West Kootenai, both of which should be completed in 2017. Lincoln County commissioner Mike Cole is working to secure the county waste transfer station in the upper West Kootenai community that is currently on private land.

Planned: *Continue improving sanitation conditions within all land ownerships, particularly on private lands. Use the results of mortality analysis to tailor public outreach/education and sanitation strategies via citizen's committee input.*

Accomplished: Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MTFWP) and Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) have bear management specialists/conservation officers working to prevent and respond to private land conflicts. Kim Annis is on call to handle conflicts in Montana while Brian Johnson manages conflicts in Idaho. They continued their Information & Education efforts focusing on bear identification and proper storage of attractants while living/recreating in bear country. Kim continued the popular bear resistant garbage container loan program and continues to work with local county officials to resolve dumpster/sanitation issues in Lincoln and Sanders counties.

The KNF conducted Information & Education efforts via meetings, booths at fairs, campground presentations, and disseminated information regarding living in bear country. This included providing information about bear safety, bear sanitation, and bear identification at the annual Huckleberry Festival in Trout Creek, MT.

The KNF Rexford RD provided public education along the Eureka "Rails to Trails" that originates in town with installing "Bear Aware" signs and walking and biking efforts for direct contact (26 personal contacts made), and had a wildlife seasonal supply food storage signs and information to the campground hosts, and replaced one of the large "You are in Bear Country" signs on an arterial road entering the West Kootenai BORZ. A seasonal employee assisted MFWP with electric fencing to prevent bear conflicts. Due to lack of funding for the Bear Ranger, efforts were at a much reduced level compared to previous years. Efforts continue to secure funding for the 2017/2018 Bear Ranger programs.

The KNF conducted closure device monitoring as part of the Ranger District's Adopt-a-Drainage programs, with gates and barriers inspected on NFS lands within and adjacent to the Recovery Zones.

WDFW staff carried out a bear awareness information module at the Northeast Washington Fair along with other venues in 2016. Inert cans of bear pepper spray are on order to facilitate demonstrations in proper usage and applications.

MFWP conducted I & E efforts via presentations, meetings and booths at public events. Presentations were given to the David Thompson SAR in Libby, Troy High School outdoors class, MSU Extension's bee and hive keeping class, Libby Middle School STEM program, Libby High School advanced biology class, Troy High School biology class, bear spray training for KNF Libby and Three Rivers district employees, and residents of the EmKayem Village neighborhood in Libby. MFWP also attended the Alvord Lake Community Forest Celebration, the Libby Dam Wildlife Day, and the Troy Apple Festival.

Planned: *Increase coordination with British Columbia partners to further Information & Education efforts on the B.C. side of the Selkirk recovery zone including the development of an electric fencing and bear resistant garbage container loaner program.*

Accomplished: The Canadian Trans-border Grizzly Bear Project (TBGBP) through Michael Proctor, has been involved in organizing and implementing conservation solutions for grizzly bear recovery within the Canadian South Selkirk and Yahk ecosystems. For instance:

- ✓ They sponsored a bear resistant bear bin program by supporting the regional community organizer and buying a portion of the bear bins that are now in a loaner/purchase program across the South Selkirk and South Purcell region. This program is moving ahead slowly.
- ✓ M. Proctor has also carried out an effort to assist and train BC Conservation Officers in non-lethal management methods for potential problem bears. This includes radio collaring and applying hard or soft releases, or short relocation within the animal's home range, to appropriate bears. In the past 10 years they have had a **90% percent success rate with 10 females** and ~ 60 percent success with 14

males. This effort has paid off, in that the BC Conservation Officer Service is starting to take on the non-lethal management as their strategy of choice when appropriate and carrying out the protocol including radio collars we still provide without M Proctor. They are expanding this program to the Cranbrook BC office where the grizzly bear kill rate of problems bears is still high.

- ✓ In response to the **number of female grizzly bears taking up residence in the Creston Valley (5-6)** as a result of their conflict reduction and non-lethal management efforts, they held an all day **“Bear Fair”** in the Creston Valley. There they featured tools for securing bear attractants to farmers, rural landowner hunters, recreationists, and the public including electric fencing, bear safety course, and how to use bear spray with lots of proactive for everyone. These tools allow area residents to be and feel safer living with grizzly bears and build tolerance for their presence in the Creston Valley.
- ✓ The TBGBP has been radio collaring grizzly bears living in the Creston Valley in a program to inform efforts for peaceful coexistence. As a measure of success and how many bears frequent the valley in spring they collared 5 bears in a week during May. They invite interested farmers, residents and students out to watch the handling and collaring of bears caught in their neighbourhood. This is very popular.
- ✓ TBGBP formed a farmer working group to try to improve the dead stock disposal issue as bear attractants. The goal is to engage the Creston Valley farmers in attractant management solutions that work for them. There have been several meetings.
- ✓ TBGBP is making efforts and raising funds to move all of these programs over to the Cranbrook South area, which extends between Cranbrook BC to Eureka MT. That region is clearly in need of these conflict and attractant management efforts, particularly in Canada.

These efforts, and the research carried out by the TBGBP, have been funded by a suite of organizations including:

Canadian Funders

- Columbia Basin Trust
- BC Habitat Trust Foundation
- Fish Wildlife Compensation Program
- Nature Conservancy Canada

U.S. Funders

- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative
- Liz Claiborne Art Ortenberg Foundation
- Wilburforce Foundation

Planned: *Develop second iteration of the grizzly bear Resource Selection Function (RSF) model for the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak grizzly bear ecosystems. Present progress at the spring SCYE IGBC meeting.*

Accomplished: A refined RSF for the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystems was presented at the Fall 2016 meeting by Dr. Proctor.

Planned: *Implement a vigorous Information and Education management strategy for the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystems.*

Accomplished: The I & E Task Force held a robust discussion on Priorities/Ideas during the March 2016 SCYE/IGBC Workshop. See responses to Planned Actions #2 and #3 for more details of ongoing I & E activities.

Planned: *Support and participate in augmentation of acceptable grizzly bears in the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem.*

Accomplished: A young, approximately 3.5 year old male bear (ID #926) was captured on the South Fork of the Flathead and released above Spar Lake on the Kootenai National Forest on July 25, 2016.

Planned: *Continue agency efforts to maintain funding for a full time bear management specialist for the State of Montana, as well as to return full-time positions to the State of Idaho where they currently are not fully funded to do bear management work. Focus on finding funding to support a bear ranger to support I & E on the Washington side of the recovery zone.*

Accomplished: Human-caused mortality is down in both ecosystems from previous years. The current I & E program which includes the efforts of bear management specialists or conservation officers has likely contributed to reducing human-caused mortalities in both ecosystems. In 2016, there were no documented human-caused related deaths in the Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem. However, there was one human-related death in the Selkirks (train-related mortality of a subadult male).

The MTFWP Bear Management Specialist position continues to be supported through “soft” money. This includes funding from Revett Mining (\$50,000) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (\$50,000). Hecla Mining has since taken over Revett Mining and it is hoped they will continue financial support of the position in the future.

The IDFG conservation officer/bear management specialist position continued to receive funding to support some Information & Education/Law Enforcement and bear management efforts. Funding for this position came from Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) (\$30,000), US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Section 6 (\$11,000), USFS IPNF (\$12,000) in 2016. IDF&G funding provided the remaining \$40,000.

The WDFW received a grant for \$3,000 from the IPNF for I & E efforts in May 2016. WDFW used the funding to initiate a grizzly bear Information & Education program in the Washington portion of the Selkirk ecosystem.

Planned: *Continue systematic and opportunistic DNA data collection of grizzly bears in the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Recovery Zones and adjacent areas.*

Accomplished: DNA is routinely collected on all radio-collared bears and during DNA-hair snare corrals and rub station efforts. Additionally, DNA may be collected opportunistically at a rub or camera site in both ecosystems.

A multi-agency effort resulted in the installation and monitoring of **160** DNA hair-snare corral sites and **154** rubs sites in and around the Selkirk ecosystem, and 29 DNA hair-snare corrals and 764 rubs sites in the Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem in 2016. This included financial/personnel support from the CNF, IDFG, IPNF, Kalispel Tribe, Kootenai Tribe, USFWS, WDFW, and Idaho Panhandle Resource Advisory Committee (RAC), as well as coordination with federal, state and private land management entities (i.e. USFS, IDL, and Hancock Forest Management). The CNF and WDFW successfully partnered to seek USFS Region 6 approval for installation of corrals in the Salmo-Priest Wilderness.

Planned: *Begin discussions concerning the content and mechanisms of a conservation strategy for one or both recovery areas with the intent of assessing the information and resources necessary to start the process.*

Accomplished: The subcommittee began discussions on the content and mechanisms of a conservation strategy during their March 2016 Workshop.

Planned: *Continue trapping and monitoring efforts in the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak ecosystems to facilitate gathering of population trend information including details on mortality, recruitment and distribution.*

Accomplished: USFWS trapping crews operated in both the Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk ecosystems during the spring and summer seasons. Wayne Kasworm monitored 14 grizzly bears in the Cabinet—Yaak ecosystem, 6 grizzly bears in the U.S. Selkirks and another 5 bears in the B.C. Selkirks for some portion of 2016. Aerial monitoring was supported with funding from the USFWS, IDFG, IPNF, CNF and KNFs.

Planned: *Complete annual recovery status report. Target date: May 2016.*

Accomplished: Wayne Kasworm reported on the current recovery status at the April 2nd SCYE IGBC Workshop.

Planned: *Initiate coordination with NCDE IGBC subcommittee*

Accomplished: The subcommittee discussed opportunities for coordinating with the NCDE IGBC subcommittee at their March 2016 workshop including the idea of having their chairperson attend the spring SCYE IGBC meeting. However, this did not occur.

Planned: *Begin discussions about habitat enhancements within the recovery zones.*

Accomplished: This topic is related to earlier discussions about how vegetation management (i.e. timber harvest and Rx burning) may be used to improve habitat conditions for grizzly bears. The subcommittee did not discuss this topic at the meetings or workshop in 2016.

Planned: *Participate in efforts to assess linkage opportunities within and between recovery zones and in British Columbia. Implement where appropriate.*

Accomplished: Michael Proctor has been working with several land conservation organizations (Nature Conservancy Canada, Nature Trust of BC, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative) within Canada to purchase (directly or in conservation easements) lands within identified linkage areas to foster and enhance inter-mountain connectivity of grizzly bears and other wildlife species. To date, over 1,200 acres worth \$2.6 million of prime linkage area lands have been protected within the Canadian Hwy 3 and 3A areas.

- ✓ In 2015-2016, the Nature Conservancy Canada purchased another linkage property (960 acres, \$1.8m) connecting the Rocky Mountains to the Purcell Mountains to enhance inter-mountain connectivity. This property was within a Linkage Area identified by the TBGBP.

In September of 2016, approximately 5,568 acres of forestland in the MacArthur Lake Wildlife Corridor area were placed in a conservation easement and conveyed to the Idaho Department of Lands through a partnership between the Molpus Woodlands Group, LLC, on behalf of clients Idaho Department of Fish and Game, The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service. This area is considered one of the region's most important wildlife linkage zones, including a potential corridor between the Selkirk and Cabinet Yaak grizzly bear recovery zones.

Planned: *Compile a record of administrative use on restricted roads for Bear Year 2015 and update condition of OMRD, TMRD and Core in each BMU. Improve coordination with U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officers in administrative use and reporting.*

Accomplished: Report completed and submitted to the USFWS by April 15, 2016.

Monitoring of the 1,136 gates/barriers throughout both recovery areas was conducted by Forest Service and State employees throughout the bear season. Repairs/enhancements of closures included:

- ✓ The CNF, IPNF, KNF and LNF monitoring gates and barriers in the Recovery Zone throughout the bear season.
 - ✓ The IPNF repaired/enhanced existing closures at a cost of \$52,000 in 2016. Road decommissioning (3.5 miles) occurred in the Roderick (#11) BMU (Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem) which was already meeting access standards.
 - ✓ The KNF repaired and enhanced closures (both gates and barriers) where necessary. Road decommissioning occurred within the Cedar (#1) BMU, which was already meeting standards, and the West Kootenai BORZ.
 - ✓ The CNF repaired/enhanced sites on different roads to prevent illegal traffic within the Recovery Zone.
 - ✓ The KNF and IPNFs also held several meetings with the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol to improve relations and discuss administrative use and reporting.
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Planned: *Make headway towards achieving access standards in the Blue Grass (Selkirk RZ), Boulder, Bull, Grouse Creek, St. Paul, Mt. Headley, and Wanless (Cabinet-Yaak RZ) BMUs by 2019.*

Accomplished: The KNF continues to respond to litigation on the Montanore Mine project. When implemented, this project would improve core and access management standards within BMU 5 and 6.

The LNF's 'Griz Travel Management Project' which is designed to meet the 2019 deadline for the Mt. Headley BMU was delayed due to salvage efforts associated with the Copper King Fire. A decision on this project is anticipated in 2018. All closures associated with the 'Fishtrap' project are complete except for one major road (i.e. Beartrap). This will be completed in 2017. In addition, Vital Ground Foundation purchased a 40-acre private inholding in core habitat within the Mt. Headley BMU that three successive private owners have proposed building a road through LNF lands to access. The Foundation is working to transfer the parcel to the USFS. Construction of a road into this parcel would have affected a large area of core habitat in spring range.

The IPNF moved forward with access associated NEPA in the Blue Grass BMU (i.e. Bog Creek Road EIS), Grouse Creek BMU (i.e. Grouse Creek Access Management EA) in 2016, and collected additional data in preparation for management proposals that would move the Boulder BMU into compliance with the Forest Plan grizzly bear access standards.

Planned: *Continue to develop and implement a coordinated, long-term, sustainable funding strategy. Pursue funding for identified unfunded work priorities including 1) Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak information and education; 2) Selkirk radio-telemetry monitoring; 3) wildlife resistant dumpsters and food storage containers; and 4) distributing bear information in both ecosystems*

Accomplished: March SCYE IGBC Workshop participants discussed development of SCYE IGBC pool of funding and grants application process as part of their standup of their I & E Task Force. The group was successful in pulling together funding for Selkirk radio-telemetry and DNA hair-snare effort from multiple partners and grant opportunities. The IPNF made significant headway in securing additional funding for purchase of bear resistant food storage boxes. Partners continue to fund the distribution of bear information through both ecosystems via support of the MT bear management specialist, ID grizzly bear Conservation Officer, and a small IPNF grant to WDFW.